

Hair Discrimination and the CROWN Act

Compelling Question: What is hair discrimination and how does it impact individuals and society?

Grade Level		Time	Standards/Competencies	
K-2	3-5	45–60 Minutes	Common Core Anchor: Reading: R1, R2, R9 Writing: W1, W7 Speaking & Listening: SL1, SL3, SL4 Language: L4, L6	SEL: Self-Awareness Social Awareness Relationship Skills Responsible Decision-Making
MS	HS			



Web Related Connections

Lessons

- [Hair, Identity and Bias](#)
- [Student Dress Codes: What's Fair?](#)
- [What is the Soul Cap and Why Was it Rejected for Olympic Use?](#)

Other Resources

- [Helping Students Make Sense of News Stories about Bias and Injustice](#)
- [Race, Perception and Implicit Bias](#)
- [Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism](#)

Key Words

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| adamant | termination |
| allegations | traditional |
| arbitrator | unprofessional |
| civil rights | versatility |
| complaint | |
| compliant | |
| constricting | |
| dignity | |
| diminish | |
| discrimination | |
| humiliated | |
| lawsuit | |
| lobbying | |
| outcast | |
| overreacting | |
| promotion | |
| rampant | |
| reckoning | |
| regulation | |
| retaliation | |

LESSON OVERVIEW

For centuries, Black people, especially Black women and girls, have faced hair discrimination. Recent studies indicate that Black girls as young as five years old experience hair discrimination and Black women are 1.5 times more likely to be sent home or know of a Black woman sent home from the workplace due to hair discrimination. The CROWN Act, which has passed in fourteen states, aims to address those inequities by prohibiting discrimination based on hair texture and hair style. Passed in the U.S. House of Representatives in March 2022, if passed by the Senate and signed by the President, it would prohibit hair texture and hair style discrimination in K-12 schools and workplaces across the U.S.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn what the CROWN Act is and the need for the bill, reflect on real-life examples of hair discrimination and on their own point of view about this issue through writing and delivering a speech.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand what the CROWN Act is.
- Students will learn about real-life examples of hair texture and style discrimination.
- Students will analyze the need for the CROWN Act.
- Students will reflect on their own perspective on the CROWN Act and hair discrimination and write a speech that reflects their own point of view.

MATERIALS & PREPARATION

- [Background Information on Hair Discrimination and the CROWN Act](#)
- Defend the Right of Black People to Exist as their Authentic Selves: Coleman Speaks about CROWN Act* YouTube video (2022, 3:16 min., Forbes Breaking News, www.youtube.com/watch?v=K37ifOc7qv4)
- “Was It Our Hair? Or Was It You?” (*Glamour*, August 25, 2020, www.glamour.com/story/the-crown-act-september-2020-cover-story), divided as follows:
 - Group A: Farryn Johnson story (one for each student in Group A)
 - Group B: Brittany Noble story (one for each student in Group B)
 - Group C: Rachel Sakabo story (one for each student in Group C)

Group D: Destiny Tompkins story (one for each student in Group D)

Group E: Kimberly and Gale Young-McLear story (one for each student in Group E)

- (Optional) [CROWN Act of 2022—H.R.2116](#) (one copy for each student)
- [Speech Graphic Organizer](#) (one copy for each student)

PROCEDURES



Information Sharing: What is the CROWN Act?

1. Ask students: *Have you ever heard of the CROWN Act? What do you think hair discrimination is? Have you ever experienced, witnessed or heard about hair discrimination?*
2. Depending on their responses, explain that the CROWN Act stands for “Create a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural Hair” and the CROWN Act is a law that prohibits discrimination based on hair texture and hair styles such as locs, braids, twists, Bantu knots, afros and natural hair. Hair discrimination impacts Black people, especially Black women and girls in schools and workplaces, who are penalized by discriminatory workplace and school dress code and grooming policies. These policies are typically based on white standards of beauty and “professionalism.” The first CROWN Act law was passed in California in 2019 and has since been passed in thirteen other states.

In March 2022, the CROWN Act was passed in the U.S. House of Representatives. If the bill gets voted on and passed by the Senate and signed into law by the President, it will prohibit hair texture and style discrimination in K-12 schools and workplaces across the U.S.
3. Show the video of Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ), who sponsored the bill, sharing her thoughts about the importance of the CROWN Act: [Defend the Right of Black People to Exist as their Authentic Selves: Coleman Speaks about CROWN Act](#).
4. After watching, ask students: *What is Representative Watson Coleman saying? What words, phrases, thoughts and expressions are noteworthy, interesting or memorable? What is your biggest takeaway from the video?*
5. Share with students [background information on hair discrimination and the CROWN Act](#) and the need for it.



Jigsaw Reading Activity: Stories about Hair Discrimination

1. Explain to students that through a reading activity, they will learn more about people who have experienced hair discrimination and the need for the CROWN Act. Divide students into five evenly sized groups and designate them Groups A, B, C, D and E. Distribute to each student the story (section) of the [“Was It Our Hair? Or Was It You?”](#) article for their designated group as follows:
 - Group A: Farryn Johnson
 - Group B: Brittany Noble
 - Group C: Rachel Sakabo
 - Group D: Destiny Tompkins
 - Group E: Kimberly and Gale Young-McLear
2. Using a jigsaw learning strategy, explain to students that they will read and discuss five stories of Black women who have faced hair discrimination. Each of them will individually read one of the stories and then learn from others in the class about the other stories. Explain that the jigsaw strategy provides an opportunity for students to learn about different aspects of a topic and then tell/teach each other. The reading can be assigned for homework the night before which will give you more class time to discuss the articles.

(You may also choose to read the introduction together as a class, either silently or aloud.)

Give students 10 minutes to read their stories silently.

3. After reading their stories, have students remain in their groups and provide 5-7 minutes for them to discuss what they've read and respond to the following questions: *What happened in this narrative? How was hair discrimination a central theme of the story? As you read the story, what thoughts and feelings came up for you?*
4. Following the discussions in their story groups, divide students into **new** groups of five students each, making sure that there is representation from each of the original groups (A, B, C, D, E) in the new groups. When the new groups are formed, give each student two minutes to share information about the story they read and their reflections about the experience of hair discrimination.
5. Reconvene the group and engage them in a class discussion by asking the following questions.
 - Was it easy or difficult to summarize the information in your article and share with others?
 - What new information did you learn about hair discrimination?
 - Based on the article you read, what was the perspective of the person telling the story?
 - To what extent does hair discrimination show a lack of respect, inclusion and equity? Please explain.
 - What does it mean to default to "white standards of beauty?" How does that negatively impact Black people individually and within institutions?
 - Should we do something to address hair discrimination in schools and workplaces? If so, what?
 - Hearing about all the stories together, what are your thoughts about hair discrimination and the need for the CROWN Act?



Optional Reading Activity: CROWN Act Bill

1. As an additional optional reading activity, have students read Sections 1 and 2 of the actual [CROWN Act of 2022—H.R.2116](#). You can read the bill aloud together and invite students to, while reading, circle or highlight words, phrases or sentences that stand out for them and those that they don't understand or need more clarification about.
2. After reading the bill together, engage students in asking clarifying questions to ensure that they understand the language, concepts, previous bills referenced, etc. You may also ask them to share what parts of the bill stand out for them and why.



Writing Activity

1. Following up from the last question of the reading activity, ask some students to share their thoughts about hair discrimination and the need for a national CROWN Act.
2. Explain to students that they are going to write a speech that conveys their point of view and opinion about the CROWN Act. Explain that the speech can either be written as if they are testifying before their colleagues as a member of Congress (like Representative Watson Coleman), as a speech that they might give at their school, or as a video of a speech they can post on social media.
3. Get students thinking about speech writing by having them respond to the following prompt: When you listen to a good speech, what makes it effective? What makes it inspirational? On the board/smartboard, record their ideas and make sure to include the following:
 - Engaging facial expression.
 - Warm and expressive tone of voice.
 - Emphasis on some words and phrases (slowing down and/or speeding up, raising or lowering voice volume).
 - Expressive hand and body motions.
 - Anecdotes or stories that illustrate the point.
 - A relaxed tone.

- Authenticity (“be yourself”).
 - Use of visual aids.
 - Compelling evidence and information that supports the perspective of the speech.
 - Eye contact and movement in different parts of the room.
4. Give students 10-15 minutes (or more, time permitting) to begin working on their speeches, using the [Speech Graphic Organizer](#) as a first step. Have students complete the first draft of their speech for homework. If time permits, have students conference with each other to improve their speeches and practice delivering the speech with a partner. Assign students the completion of the speech for homework over the next few days or weeks.
 5. When the speeches are completed, have students deliver them as class presentations. Consider having students record them and make them available on your school or class website and/or social media channels.

Closing

Have students share one thing they learned during the lesson that they didn’t know before.

ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- [As Early as Five: End Race-Based Hair Discrimination](#) (Dove)
- [“Black Students Say They are Being Penalized for Their Hair, and Experts Say Every Student is Worse Off Because of It”](#) (CNN, March 8, 2020)
- [The CROWN Act](#) (*Essence*)
- [The Crown Act: Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair](#) (NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund)
- [“CROWN Act Movement Seeks to Protect Black People from Racial Discrimination Based on Hairstyles”](#) (Southern Poverty Law Center, April 15, 2020)
- [CROWN Act of 2021--H.R.2116](#) (Congress.Gov)
- [“The Crown Act Was Just Passed by the House of Representatives. Now It’s Up to the Senate”](#) (*Glamour*, March 18, 2022)
- [“Dove Releases Data That Black Girls Become Victims of Hair Discrimination as Young as 5 Years Old”](#) (*Diva Chronicles Magazine*, January 31, 2022)
- [“Everything You Need to Know About The Crown Act”](#) (*Byrdie*, March 18, 2022)
- [Hair Love](#) (December 5, 2019)
- [“States and Cities are Banning Hair Discrimination. Here’s How that’s Affecting Schools”](#) (Chalkbeat, January 16, 2020)

Common Core Standards

CONTENT AREA/STANDARD
Reading
R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
R2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
R9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
Writing
W1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
W7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
Speaking & Listening
SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
SL3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
SL4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
Language
L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
L6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

CASEL's SEL Competencies

COMPETENCIES
Self-Awareness: The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.

Social Awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.

Relationship Skills: The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.

Responsible Decision-Making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.

Background Information on Hair Discrimination and the CROWN Act

- There has been hair discrimination against Black people, especially Black women and girls based on hair style and texture, for centuries. A [2021 study](#) by Dove CROWN Research for Girls, in collaboration with JOY Collective, found that:
 - Black girls as young as five years old experience hair discrimination (as reported by their parents).
 - 86% of Black teenagers started experiencing discrimination based on their hair by the age of twelve.
 - 81% of Black children in majority-white schools say they sometimes wish their hair was straight.
 - A previous study by Dove (in 2019) found that Black women were 1.5 times more likely to be sent home or know of a Black woman sent home from the workplace because of her hair.
 - 80% of Black women are more likely to change their hair from its natural state to “fit in” at their place of work.
- Hair discrimination impacts K-12 students in a variety of ways. Here are some examples:
 - Students who receive detentions and suspensions for violating school dress codes which prohibit wearing hair in braids with extensions
 - Student athletes who are unable to participate in sports unless they cut or change their hair
 - Displays that show images of Black children, including Black girls with braids, that label those hairstyles as “inappropriate”
- The CROWN Act was first passed in California in 2019. The law states:

"In a society in which hair has historically been one of many determining factors of a person's race, and whether they were a second-class citizen, hair today remains a proxy for race. Therefore, hair discrimination targeting hairstyles associated with race is racial discrimination."
- Since California passed the CROWN Act in 2019, thirteen other states have passed the CROWN Act or a comparable law as of March 2022: New York, New Jersey, Virginia, Colorado, Washington, Maryland, Connecticut, New Mexico, Delaware, Nebraska, Nevada, Illinois and Oregon. The CROWN Act has been filed or pre-filed in other states as well.
- On March 18, 2022, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the CROWN Act. The next steps are for the Senate to vote on the bill. In 2020, the CROWN Act was previously passed in the U.S. House of Representatives but didn't get a vote in the Republican-controlled Senate.

Speech Graphic Organizer

INTRODUCTION

Opening line to grab your audience

State your position or opinion about the CROWN Act

MAIN POINTS

What is your position about the CROWN Act and why?

What problem are you trying to solve?

What facts, quotes, statistics or other information can you provide to convince your audience?

CONCLUSION

Summarize your main points

Review central ideas of your position

Call to Action: What do you want people to do and what do they need to do it?